

A

LETTER

TO A

P E R S O N

Lately join'd with the

PEOPLE call'd *QUAKERS*.

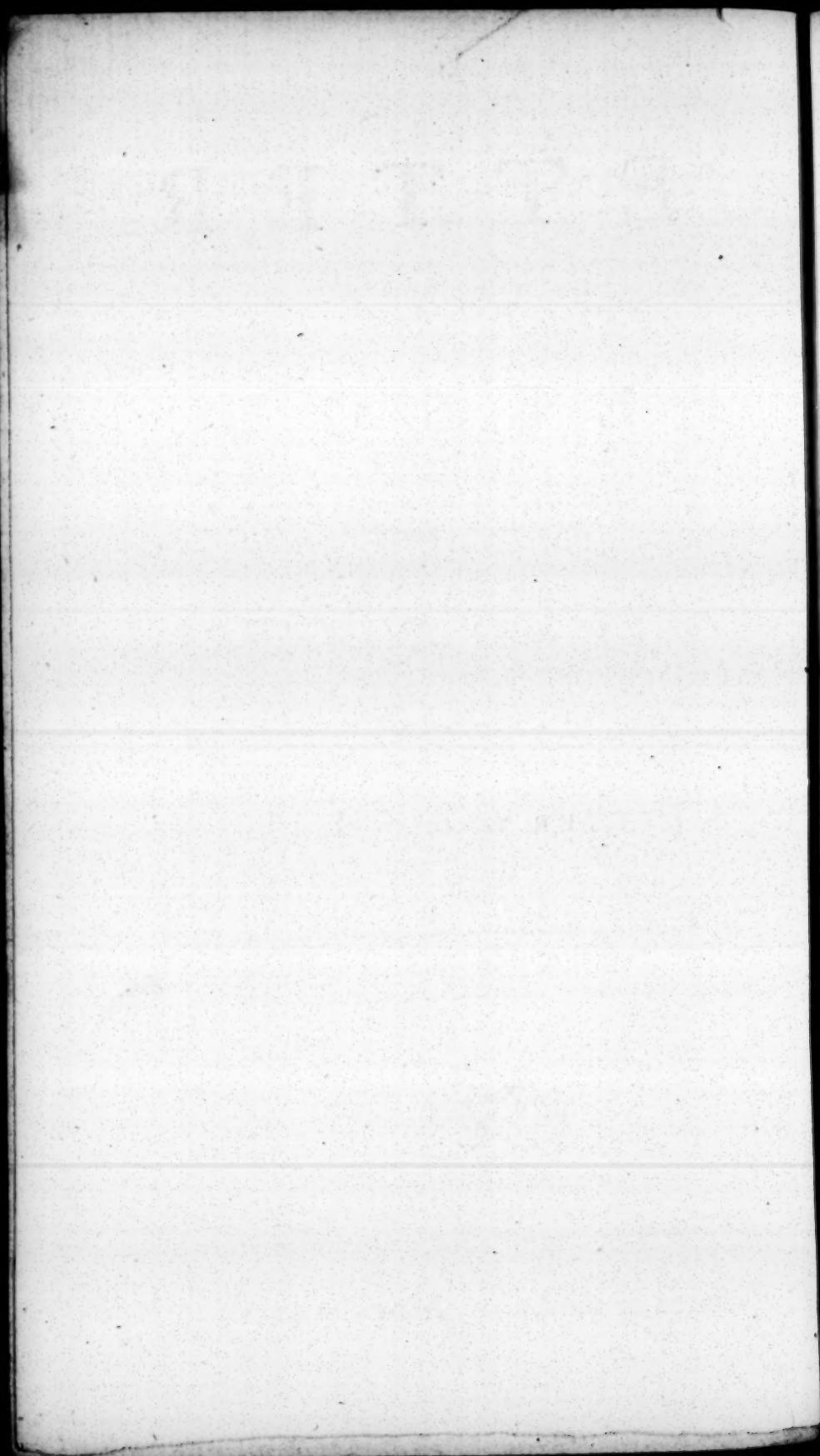
In ANSWER to

A LETTER wrote by HIM.

The THIRD EDITION.



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A

LETTER, &c.

Bristol, Feb. 10, 1747-8.

YOU ask me, "Is there any Difference, between *Quakerism* and *Christianity*? I think there is. What that Difference is, I will tell you as plainly as I can.

I will first set down the Account of *Quakerism* (so call'd) which is given by *Robert Barclay*: And then add, wherein (as I conceive) it agrees with, and wherein it differs from Christianity.

But I must premise, I do by no Means intend to deny, by any of the following Reflections, That many *Quakers* (so termed) are Real Christians; Men who have the Mind that was in *Christ*. With some of them I count it a Blessing to converse, and cannot but esteem them very highly in Love. Therefore in answering your Question, (which Love constrains me to do) let me be understood to speak of their *Opinions* only: Meaning by *Quakerism*, That System of *Opinions* which is espoused by the People commonly call'd *Quakers*.

I. "Seeing the Height of all Happiness is placed in the true Knowledge of God, the right Understanding of this is what is most necessary to be known in the first Place."

II. "It is by the Spirit alone that the true Knowledge of God hath been, is, and can be reveal'd. And these Revelations which are absolutely necessary for the building up of True Faith, neither do nor can ever

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contradict Right Reason or the Testimony of the Scriptures."

Thus far there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

" Yet these Revelations are not to be subjected to the Examinations of the Scriptures as to a Touchstone."

Here, as I apprehend, there is a Difference. The Scriptures are the Touchstone whereby Christians examine all (Real or Supposed) Revelations. In all Cases they appeal *to the Law and to the Testimony*, and try every Spirit thereby.

III. " From these Revelations of the Spirit of God to the Saints, have proceeded the Scriptures of Truth."

In this there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

" Yet the Scriptures are *not the Principal Ground of all Truth and Knowledge*, nor the adequate, primary Rule of Faith and Manners. Nevertheless they are a Secondary Rule, subordinate to the Spirit. By Him the Saints are led into all Truth. Therefore the Spirit is the first and Principal Leader."

If by these Words, " The Scriptures are *not the Principal Ground of Truth and Knowledge*, nor the adequate, primary Rule of Faith and Manners," be only meant, that "*the Spirit is our first and Principal Leader*," Here is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

But there is great Impropriety of Expression. For tho' the Spirit is our *Principal Leader*, yet He is not our *Rule* at all: The Scriptures are the *Rule* whereby He *leads us into* all Truth. Therefore only talk good *English*: Call the Spirit our *Guide* (which signifies an Intelligent Being) and the Scriptures our *Rule* (which signifies something used by an Intelligent Being) and all is plain and clear.

IV. " All Mankind is fallen and dead, deprived of the Sensation of this Inward Testimony of God, and subject to the Power and Nature of the Devil, while they abide in their Natural State. And hence not only

ly their Words and Deeds, but all their Imaginations are evil perpetually in the Sight of God."

V. "God out of his infinite Love hath so loved the World, that he gave his only Son, to the End that whosoever believeth on him, might have everlasting Life. And he enlighteneth every Man that cometh into the World, as he tasted Death for every Man."

VI. "The Benefit of the Death of *Christ* is not only extended to such as have the distinct Knowledge of his Death and Sufferings, but even unto those who are inevitably excluded from this Knowledge. Even these may be Partakers of the Benefit of his Death, tho' ignorant of the History, if they suffer his Grace to take Place in their Hearts, so as of wicked Men to become Holy."

In these Points there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

VII. "As many as receive the Light, in them is produced a holy and spiritual Birth, bringing forth Holiness, Righteousness, Purity, and all other blessed Fruits. By which holy Birth, as we are sanctified, so we are justified."

Here is a wide Difference between Quakerism and Christianity. This is flat Justification by Works. Whereas the Christian Doctrine is, *That we are justified by Faith: That unto him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his Faith is counted to him for Righteousness.*

The Ground of this Mistake, is, the not understanding the Meaning of the Word Justification. For *Robert Barclay* takes it in the same Sense as the Papists do, confounding it with Sanctification. So in the 208th Page of his *Apology*, he says in express Terms, "Justification taken in its proper Signification, is, Making one just, and is *all one with Sanctification.*"

VIII. "In whom this holy Birth is fully brought forth, the Body of Sin and Death is crucified, and their
Hearts

Hearts are subjected to the Truth, so as not to obey any Suggestion of the Evil One, but to be free from Actual Sinning and transgressing of the Law of God, and in that respect, perfect."

IX. " They in whom his Grace hath wrought in part, to purify and sanctify them, may yet by Disobedience fall from it, and make Shipwreck of the Faith."

In these Propositions, there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

X. " By this Light of God in the Heart, every true Minister is ordain'd, prepared, and supplied in the Work of the Ministry."

As to Part of this Proposition, there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity. Doubtless "every true Minister is by the Light of God prepared and supplied in the Work of the Ministry." But the Apostles themselves *ordain'd* them by *laying on of Hands*. So we read throughout the *Acts of the Apostles*.

" They who have this Light of God, ought to preach the Gospel, tho' without Human Commission or Literature. On the other Hand, they who have it not, are not true Ministers of the Gospel."

I cannot quite agree with you in this. But it is a difficult Point. I think, and let think.

" They who have received this Gift, ought not to use it as a Trade, to get Money thereby. Yet it may be lawful for such to receive what may be needful to them for Food and Cloathing."

In this there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

" We judge it no Ways unlawful, for a Woman to preach in the Assemblies of God's People."

In this there is a manifest Difference. For the Apostle Paul saith expressly, *Let your Women keep Silence in the Churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak---And if they will learn any Thing, let them ask their Husbands at home; for it is a Shame for Women to speak in the Church,* 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35.

Robert

Robert Barclay indeed says, "*Paul* here only reproves the inconsiderate and talkative Women."

But the Text says no such Thing. It evidently speaks of Women in general.

Again, the Apostle *Paul* saith to *Timothy*, *Let your Women learn Silence with all Subjection. For I suffer not a Woman to teach, nor to usurp Authority over the Man, (which Public Teaching necessarily implies) but to be in Silence, 1 Tim. ii. 11, 12.*

To this *Robert Barclay* makes only that harmless Reply; "We think this is not any Ways repugnant to this Doctrine." Not repugnant to this, "I do suffer a Woman to teach!" Then I know not what is.

"But a Woman labour'd with *Paul* in the Work of the Gospel." Yea! but not in the Way he had himself expressly forbidden.

"But *Joel* foretold, your Sons and your Daughters shall prophesy. And *Philip* had four Daughters which Prophesied. And the Apostle himself directs Women to Prophesy; only with their Heads covered."

Very Good. But how do you prove that prophesying in any of these Places means Preaching?

XI. "All True Worship to God is offer'd in the inward and immediate Moving of his own Spirit. We ought not to pray or preach where and when we will, but where and when we are moved thereto by his Spirit. All other Worship, both Praises, Prayers and Preachings, which Man sets about in his own Will and at his own Appointment, which he can begin and end at his Pleasure, do or leave undone, as Himself sees meet, are but Superstitions, Will-Worship, and abominable Idolatries."

Here lies One of the main Differences between Quakerism and Christianity.

It is true indeed, That "all True Worship to God is offer'd in the inward and immediate Moving of his own Spirit:" Or, (to speak plain) that we cannot truly worship God, unless his Spirit move or incline our Hearts. It is equally true, That "we ought to pray and preach, only where and when we are moved thereto

thereto by his Spirit.” But I fear you do not in any wise understand, What the being *moved by his Spirit* means? God *moves* Man whom he has made a *reasonable* Creature, according to the *Reason* which he has given him. He *moves* him by his *Understanding*, as well as his *Affections*, by *Light* as well as by *Heat*. He *moves* him to do this or that by *Conviction*, full as often as by *Desire*. Accordingly, you are as really *moved by the Spirit* when he convinces you, you ought to feed him that is hungry, as when he gives you ever so strong an *Impulse*, *Desire* or *Inclination* so to do.

In like Manner, you are as really *moved by the Spirit*, to pray, whether it be in publick or private, when you have a Conviction it is the Will of God you should, as when you have the Strongest *Impulse* upon your Heart. And He does truly *move* you to preach, when in his Light you *see Light*, clearly satisfying you it is his Will: As much as when you *feel* the most vehement *Impulse* or *Desire*, to *hold forth the Words of Eternal Life*.

Now let us consider the main Proposition. “ All Worship which Man sets about in his own Will, and at his own Appointment.”—Hold! That is quite another Thing. It may be *at his own Appointment*, and yet not *in his own Will*. For Instance: It is not my own Will to preach at all. It is quite contrary to my Will. Many a Time have I cried out, LORD, *send by whom Thou wilt send*: Only *send not me*! But I am *moved by the Spirit of God* to preach: He clearly *shews* me it is his Will I should: And that I should do it *when* and *where* the greatest Number of poor Sinners may be gather’d together. *Moved by Him*, I give up my *Will*, and *appoint* a Time and Place, when by his Power I trust to speak in his Name.

How widely different, then, from True Christianity is that amazing Sentence, “ All Praises, Prayers and Preachings which Man can begin and end at his Pleasure, do or leave undone, as himself sees meet, are Superstitions, Will-worship, and abominable Idolatry, in the Sight of God ?”

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There is not one Tittle of Scripture for this: Nor yet is there any sound Reason. When you take it for granted, " In all Preachings which a Man begins or ends at his Pleasure, does or leave undone as he *sees meet*," he is not *moved* by the Spirit of God, you are too hastily a great deal. It may be by the Spirit, that he *sees meet* to do or leave it undone. How will you prove that it is not? *His Pleasure* may depend on the Pleasure of God, signified to him by his Spirit. His *appointing* this or that Time or Place, does in no wise prove the contrary. Prove me that Proposition if you can, " Every Man who preaches or prays at an *appointed* Time, preaches or prays *in his own Will* and not by the Spirit."

That all such Preaching is *Will-worship*, in the Sense St. Paul uses the Word, is no more true than that it is Murder. That it is *Superstition*, remains also to be proved. That it is *abominable Idolatry*, how will you reconcile with what follows but a few Lines after? " How ever it might please God, who winked at the Times of Ignorance, to raise some Breathing and answer them." What! Answer the Breathing of *abominable Idolatry*? I observe how warily this is worded. But it allows enough. If God ever raised and answer'd those Prayers which were made at *set* Times, then those Prayers could not be *abominable Idolatry*.

Again, that Prayers and Preachings, tho' made at *appointed* Times, may yet proceed from the Spirit of God, may be clearly proved from those other Words of Robert Barclay himself, Page 389.

" That Preaching (or Prayer) which is not done by the Actings and Movings of God's Spirit, cannot beget Faith." Most true. But Preaching and Prayer at *appointed* Times, have begotten Faith (both at *Bristol* and *Paulton*. You know it well.) Therefore that Preaching and Prayer, tho' at *appointed* Times, was done by the Actings and Movings of God's Spirit."

It follows, that this Preaching and Prayer, were far from *abominable Idolatry*. That Expression can never be defended. Say, It was a rash Word, and give it up.

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In Truth, from the Beginning to the End, You set this Matter upon a wrong Foundation. It is not on this Circumstance, "The being at *set* Times, or not, that the Acceptableness of our Prayers depends: But on the Intention and Tempers with which we pray. He that prays in Faith, at whatsoever Time, is heard. In every Time and Place, God accepts him who *lifts up holy Hands, without Wrath or Doubting*. The Charge of Superstition therefore returns upon yourself. For what gross Superstition is this, to lay so much Stress on an indifferent Circumstance, and so little on *Faith* and the *Love* of God?

But to proceed. "We confess Singing of Psalms, to be a Part of God's Worship, and very sweet and refreshing, when it proceeds from a true Sense of God's Love. But as for Formal Singing, it has no Foundation in Scripture."

In this there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

"Silence is a Principal Part of God's Worship: *i. e.* Mens "sitting silent together, ceasing from all Outwards, from their own Words, and Actings, in the Natural Will and Comprehension, and feeling after the inward Seed of Life."

In this there is a manifest Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

This is Will-worship, if there be any such Thing under Heaven. For there is neither Command, nor Example for it in Scripture.

Robert Barclay indeed refers to abundance of Scriptures, to prove it as a *Command*. But as he did not see good to set them down at length, I will take the Trouble to transcribe a few of them.

Psalms, xxvii. 14. *Wait on the LORD: be of good Courage, and He shall strengthen thine Heart.*

Psalms, xxxvii. 7. *Rest in the LORD and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself at him who prospereth in his Way.*

Verse, 34. *Wait on the LORD and keep his Way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the Land.*

Prov.

Prov. xx. 22. Say not thou I will recompence Evil; but wait on the LORD, and He shall save thee.

By these one may judge of the rest. But how amazing is this? What are all these to the Point in Question?

For *Examples of Silent Meetings* he refers to the five Texts of Scriptures following:

Acts, ii. 1. They were all with one Accord in one Place.

Job, ii. 13. So they sat down with him Seven Days and Seven Nights, and none spake a Word unto him: for they saw that his Grief was very great.

Ezra, ix. 4. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the Words of GOD—And I sat astonished until the Evening Sacrifice.

Ezek. xiv. 1. and xx. 1. Then came certain of the Elders of Israel unto me, and sat before me.

Was it possible for *Robert Barclay* to believe, That any one of these Texts was any thing to the Purpose?

XII. "As there is one LORD and one Faith, so there is one Baptism." Yea, one Outward Baptism: which you deny. Here therefore is another Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

But "if those whom *John* Baptized with Water, were not baptised with the Baptism of CHRIST, then the Baptism of Water is not the Baptism of CHRIST."

This is a mere Quibble. The Sequel ought to be, "Then *that* Baptism of Water, (*i. e.* *John's* Baptism,) was not the Baptism of CHRIST." Who says it was?

Yet *Robert Barclay* is so fond of this Argument that he repeats it almost in the same Words.

"If *John* who administred the Baptism of Water, yet did not Baptize with the Baptism of CHRIST, then the Baptism of Water is not the Baptism of CHRIST."

This is the same Fallacy still. The Sequel here also should be, "Then *that* Baptism of Water was not the Baptism of CHRIST."

He repeats it, with a little Variation a third Time, "CHRIST himself saith, *John baptizèd with Water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost.*"

He repeats it a fourth Time: " Peter saith, *Then remember'd I the Word of the LORD, John baptiz'd with Water, but ye shall be baptiz'd with the Holy Ghost.* From all which it follows, That such as *John* baptized with Water, yet were not baptized with the Baptism of CHRIST," Very true. But this proves neither more nor less than that the Baptism of *John* differ'd from the Baptism of CHRIST. And so doubtless it did: not indeed as to the *Outward-Sign*, but as to the *Inward Grace*.

XIII. " The breaking of Bread by CHRIST with his Disciples was but a Figure, and ceases in such as have obtain'd the Substance."

Here is another manifest Difference between Quakerism and Christianity.

From the very Time that our LORD gave that Command, *Do this in Remembrance of Me*, all Christians throughout the habitable World, did eat Bread and drink Wine in Remembrance of Him.

Allowing therefore all that *Robert Barclay* affirms for eighteen or twenty Pages together, viz. 1. That Believers partake of the Body and Blood of CHRIST in a Spiritual manner; 2. That this may be done, in some Sense, when we are not eating Bread and drinking Wine; 3. That the *Lutherans*, *Calvinists* and *Papists* differ from each other, with regard to the LORD's Supper; and 4. That many of them have spoken wildly and absurdly concerning it: Yet all this will never prove, That we need not do, what CHRIST has expressly commanded to be done: And what the whole Body of Christians in all Ages have done, in Obedience to that Command.

That there was such a Command, you cannot deny. But you say, " It is ceased in such as have obtain'd the Substance."

St. Paul knew nothing of this. He says nothing of its ceasing, in all he writes of it to the *Corinthians*, Nay, quite the contrary. He says, *As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do shew the LORD's Death till he come.* O, say you, the Apostle means " his

“ his Inward Coming, which some of the *Corinthians* “ had not yet known.” Nay, this cannot be his Meaning. For he saith to all the *Corinthian* Communicants, *Ye do shew the LORD's Death till he come.* Now if He was not come (spiritually) in some of these, undoubtedly he was in others. Consequently he cannot be speaking here of that Coming, which in many of them, at least, was already past. It remains, that he speaks of his Coming in the Clouds, to judge both the Quick and Dead.

XIV. “ Since God hath assumed to Himself the Dominion of the Conscience, who alone can rightly instruct and govern it, therefore it is not lawful for any whatsoever, to force the Consciences of others.”

In this there is no Difference at all between Quakerism and Christianity.

XV. It is not lawful for Christians to give or receive Titles of Honour, as, your Majesty, your Lordship, &c.

In this there is a Difference between Quakerism and Christianity. Christians may give Titles of Honour, such as are usually annexed to certain Offices.

Thus St. *Paul* gives the usual Title of *Most Noble* to the *Roman* Governour. *Robert Barclay* indeed says, “ he would not have called him such, if he had not been *truly Noble*: as indeed he was, in that he would not give Way to the Fury of the Jews against him.”

The Scripture says quite otherwise: That he *did* give Way to the Fury of the Jews against him. I read, *Festus willing to do the Jews a Pleasure* (who had desired a Favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying in wait in the Way to kill him) said to Paul, *Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these Things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Cesar's Judgment-Seat, where I ought to be judged: To the Jews have I done no Wrong, as Thou very well knowest. If I have done any thing worthy of Death, I refuse not to die; but if there be none of these Things whereof these accuse me, no Man may deliver me unto them.*

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Hence it plainly appears, *Festus* was a very wicked Person, one who to *do the Jews a Pleasure*, would have betray'd the innocent Blood. But altho' *St. Paul* was not ignorant of his Character, still he calls him, *Most Noble Festus*, giving him the Title of his Office; which indeed was neither more nor less than saying "Governor *Festus*," or "King *Agrippa*."

It is therefore mere Superstition to scruple this. And it is, if possible, greater Superstition still, to scruple saying, *You*, *Vous*, or *Ihr*, whether to One or more Persons, as is the common Way of Speaking in any Country. It is this which fixes the Language of every Nation. It is this which makes me say *You* in *England*, *Vous* in *France*, and *Ihr* in *Germany*, rather than *Thou*, *Tu*, or *Du*, rather than $\Sigma\upsilon$, $\Sigma\epsilon$, or $\Gamma\upsilon$ (which if we speak strictly, is the only Scriptural Language; not *Thou* or *Thee*, any more than *You*.) But the placing Religion in such Things as these, is such egregious Trifling, as naturally tends to make all Religion stink in the Nostrils of Infidels and Heathens.

And yet this, by a far greater Abuse of Words than that you would reform, you call *the Plain Language*. O my Friend! He uses the Plain Language, who speaks the Truth from his Heart. Not he who says *Thee* or *Thou*, and at the mean Time will dissemble or flatter, like the rest of the World.

"It is not lawful for Christians to kneel or bow the Body, or uncover the Head to any Man."

If this is not lawful, then some Law of GOD forbids it. Can you shew me that Law? If you cannot, then the scrupling this is another plain Instance of Superstition, not Christianity.

"It is not lawful for a Christian to use Superfluities in Apparel: As neither, to use such Games, Sports and Plays, under the Notion of Recreations, as are not consistent with Gravity and Godly Fear."

As to both these Propositions, there is no Difference between Quakerism and Christianity. Only observe, touching the former, that the Sin of *Superfluous Apparel*, lies chiefly in the *Superfluous Expence*. To make it therefore a Point of Conscience, to differ from others

others, as to the *Shape* or *Colour* of your Apparel, is mere Superstition: Let the Difference lie in the *Price*, that you may have the more wherewith to cloath them that have none.

“ It is not lawful for Christians to swear before a Magistrate, nor to fight in any Case.”

Whatever becomes of the latter Proposition, the former is no Part of Christianity: For CHRIST himself answered upon Oath before a Magistrate. Yea, he would not answer till he was put to his Oath; till the High-Priest said unto him, *I adjure thee by thee living God.*

I have now given you, (so far as my Time would permit) a plain Answer to a plain Question: not troubling myself with the personal Reflections, which make up so great a Part of your Letter. These do not at all lessen my Affection for you: I still mourn over you as one that did run well, that *began in the Spirit*, and is now in danger of *ending in the Flesh*. You have an honest Heart, but a weak Head: You have a Zeal, but not according to Knowledge. You was zealous once for the Love of God and Man; for Holiness of Heart and Holiness of Life. You are now zealous, for Particular Forms of Speaking, for a Set of Phrases, and Opinions. Once your Zeal was against Ungodliness and Unrighteousness, against Evil Tempers and Evil Works. Now it is against Forms of Prayer, against Singing Psalms or Hymns, against appointing Times of praying or preaching: Against saying *you* to a single Person, uncovering your Head, or having too many Buttons upon your Coat. O what a Fall is there! What poor Trifles are these, that now well nigh engross your Thoughts? Come Back, come back to the weightier Matters of the Law, to Spiritual, Rational, Scriptural Religion. No longer waste your Time and Strength in beating the Air, in vain Controversies and Strife of Words: but bend your whole Soul to the growing in Grace and in the Knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, to the continually advancing in that Holiness, without which you cannot see the LORD.

I am your sincere Friend and Servant,
For CHRIST's Sake.

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